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Slaughter answers to Tonawanda residents

POLITICS: *The congresswoman speaks in the City of Tonawanda on health care and terrorism.*

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It's hard to be in three places at once, but that's the juggling act Louise Slaughter is trying to balance.

U.S. Rep. Slaughter represents the 28th Congressional District, which includes Niagara Falls, Buffalo and Rochester. Saturday, Slaughter visited the City of Tonawanda to find out what local residents think are major issues in the area.

"I was wondering about rebuilding Main Street," Nancy Paschen, a City of Tonawanda resident, said. "Since urban renewal happened a decade ago, Main Street has been dead."

Paschen also asked questions about Medicaid costs during the hour-long meeting at City Hall on Niagara Street.

Sven Hammar, also a City of Tonawanda resident, wanted to hear about the future of Amtrak.

"The airports are crowded and it's a way to combat congestion on the highways," Hammar said. "It's much more efficient to take the train than to drive. Railroads have suffered recently, especially in this area."

Tonawanda Mayor Jack Gallagher directed his constituents' questions to Slaughter. He said the majority of the questions he fielded were related to health care and terrorism.

"Those were the issues that are on most people's minds," he said. "I think our residents are very interested with what Louise can do for our area."

Slaughter said health care was one of her main concerns as well.

"Seniors are hurting," she said. "The Medicare bill that passed is really intended to destroy Medicare. The bill was not written for seniors as much as it was written for the drug companies."

Slaughter said she was an advocate for importing pharmaceutical drugs from Canada to keep prices low.

"The government tries to tell us we can't import drugs from Canada because they're dangerous," Slaughter said. "We all know that is ridiculous. The Canadians would be dying in droves."

Slaughter also wants to bring more jobs to the area by keeping companies from moving overseas and increasing commerce over the Canadian border.

"My biggest problem is trying to get people across," Slaughter said. "These four to five

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CARLENE PETERSON/STAFF

GETTING FEEDBACK: Nancy Paschen, left, a City of Tonawanda resident, talks with U.S. Rep. Louise Slaughter on Saturday at City Hall.

SLAUGHTER ...

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hour waits are horrendous. They're hurting the economy."

Slaughter doesn't want to hinder commerce and travel, but she is still concerned with national security.

"We want to make sure things are safe," she said. "But it's absolutely awful to have a 5-year-old's back-pack looked

through."

The war in Iraq is a huge issue for Americans no matter where they live, Slaughter said. Three years after the Sept. 11 attacks, the country is still spending about \$600 billion a month on the war.

"And what are we getting for it?" Slaughter said. "Today, large parts of Iraq are not in our control, and it's more dangerous than it's ever been."

The widening gap between the middle and upper classes is

also troublesome for Slaughter. She said the number of underpaid workers in America with no benefits is much too high.

Despite national hardships, Slaughter said this area has been doing well in recent years.

"I think this part of my district is turning around fast," she said. "We need to be proud of what we have."

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